



NEWS RELEASE

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SBA AND NATIONAL ACADEMY FOUNDATION LAUNCH PARTNERSHIP TO LINK STUDENT INTERNS WITH SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

Small Businesses Nationwide Pledge Their Support

WASHINGTON – Today, Aida Alvarez, Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), and Sanford Weill, chairman of the National Academy Foundation (NAF) and co-CEO of Citigroup, signed a partnership agreement to provide mentoring and training opportunities at small businesses for high school students. In support of the initiative, small businesses from the 50 states are expected to commit to providing students with internship opportunities.

“The internships will be a way for students to gain valuable work experience and to help train future entrepreneurs,” Administrator Alvarez said.

Through the agreement, SBA commits to linking small business owners willing to provide students with entrepreneurial training in a real business setting with the NAF’s public school network, representing over 350 public schools throughout the country.

Administrator Alvarez and Chairman Weill signed the partnership agreement in the presence of small business owners, former and prospective students of the program, NAF corporate sponsors and SBA national partners.

Through its district offices, SBA will work at the local level to implement the agreement and to link small businesses with students. SBA’s 70 district offices are working in their districts with small businesses prepared to offer internships to students. The SBA also has asked its district offices to promote a *Kids Count* campaign to urge parents from the small business community to complete their census forms.

The NAF prepares young people for higher education and future careers in the financial services, travel and tourism, and information technology sectors. The agreement calls for SBA and the NAF to foster programs that combine school-based learning and work-based experience.

The SBA-NAF initiative coincides with the launch of the Census Bureau’s *Census in Schools* campaign to increase participation in Census 2000. In the 1990 census, children represented the largest group that was undercounted in America. For this reason, Census 2000 is targeting schools to help raise awareness.

“Our partnership agreement today underscores a basic premise that kids do count,” Administrator Alvarez said. **“These youngsters will be exposed to a broader range of opportunities and experience.”**

Administrator Alvarez asked the SBA’s national partners to support the Census Bureau’s campaign: “It’s your future – don’t leave it blank.”

For more information on all of SBA’s programs for small businesses, call the SBA Answer Desk at 1 800 U ASK SBA, or visit the SBA’s extensive Web site at www.sba.gov.

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